



TALKS

ABOUT



ZION.

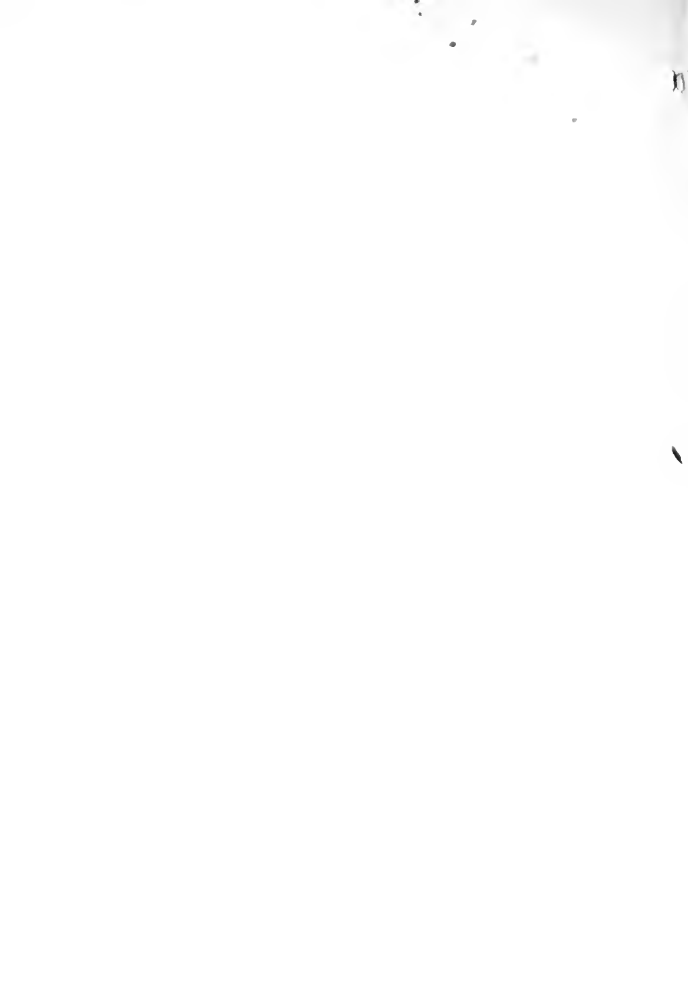
REV. JOSEPH ELLIOT.



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WALKS ABOUT ZION.



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WALKS ABOUT ZION.

BY

REV. JOSEPH ELLIOT.

Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces.—Ps. 48 : 13.

And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her : and the Highest Himself shall establish her.—Ps. 87 : 5.

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PREFACE.

IN accordance with suggestions of several friends, the following addresses have been prepared for the press as a contribution to family Sabbath readings, and with a view to prayer meetings held in the absence of stated ministers. In this age of growing Christian activities, it often devolves on many besides ministers of the Gospel to preside at prayer meetings. Some think it well to supplement remarks of their own with readings from different authors ; but difficulty is often felt in making suitable selection. Excellent printed sermons can easily be obtained ; but most of them are far too long for such meetings, and to read a part or parts thereof is a plan that has its disadvantages.

Such are some of the considerations that have had to do with the preparation of the following addresses.

The first soul "received up into heaven" was that of a young man; and it will be felt an honour and a joy if in any measure these contributions be found acceptable and aiding to "Young Men's Christian Associations."

Having continual regard to brevity, the writer has aimed to present Scripture truths in a variety of relations and practical aspects, with a view to the Spiritual benefit of believers, the comfort of mourners in Zion, and the encouragement of anxious inquirers; and this little book is offered—specially to Christian workers—in a spirit of prayer to God by whose Word we are assured that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

JOSEPH ELLIOT.

CANNINGTON, CANADA,

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I.—CHRISTIAN UNITY.





I.—CHRISTIAN UNITY.

AS we read the history of nations and ponder the age in which we live, there come in upon our thoughts an almost endless diversity of developments of spirit and character—yet human nature is essentially the same in all ages ; for, “as in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.”

And with equal propriety may it be said that *renewed* human nature is in all ages essentially the same : hence there is a profoundly appropriate basis for unity of spirit amid the relationships of renewed souls to the one only living and true God.

That our minds may be the more impressed by the truth that renewed human nature is in all ages essentially the same, let us, in the light of Scripture, compare the leading charac-

teristics of the spirit of two godly men that lived under different dispensations ; the spirit of David and that of Paul.

They had essentially the same state of feeling as to their *depravity and sinfulness*. Paul said, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing ;" David said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity."

They had the same *clinging of soul to the Messiah* ; the one to Christ as the Messiah to come, the other to the Saviour that had appeared. Paul called himself "a servant of the Lord Jesus ;" David "in spirit called Christ, Lord."

They had the same feeling as to *the origin of their godliness*. Paul said, "By the grace of God I am what I am ;" David said, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit."

They had the same *tone of lamentation over indwelling sin*. Paul said, "I find a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me ;" David said, "My soul cleaveth to

the dust, quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word."

They had the same earnest desire *to become better*. Paul said, "I press toward the mark;" David said, "O that my way were directed to keep thy statutes."

They had the same *consolation under trial*. Paul said, "I am filled with comfort;" David said, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul."

They had the same *good hope through grace*. Paul said, "And so shall we be ever with the Lord;" David said, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

They had the same *religious patriotism*. Paul said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved;" David says, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law."

They had the same *world-wide benevolence*. Paul rejoices with a great joy that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself;"

David said, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

They had the same *fraternal spirit of unity*. Paul said. "Brethren, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you ;" David said, "Behold, how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Having placed on record that glowing exclamation at the beginning of the 133rd Psalm, David was led by the spirit to assign three great reasons why such unity is good.

First.—Because "it is like the precious ointment upon Aaron's beard, that ran down to the skirts of his garments." As the ointment would indicate to any observer that he was a Priest of the Highest, so the spirit recommended by the Psalmist is an indication of being numbered amongst "the anointed of the Lord." "By this," said the

Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Second.—Because, "It is as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Israel." As the dew was beautiful in the rays of the rising sun, so is unity of spirit amid the light of "the Sun of Righteousness;" and as it was refreshing and fructifying, so will it be found that where there is a spirit of love and unity there will be "times of refreshing," and the more rapid growth of "the fruit of the Spirit"—of whom, in Ephesians IV., we read, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" in immediate connection with the words "Let all bitterness be put away from you, and be ye kind one to another."

Third.—Because, "there the Lord commanded the blessing—even life for evermore." So acceptable to the Lord is the spirit of unity in "the household of faith" that they by whom it is cherished and displayed are

not allowed to be without the blessing, whatever may threaten to prevent. He sees to it that the blessing shall be theirs. He *commands* the blessing ; blessing begun now, and to last forever—"even life for evermore."

Having assigned these weighty reasons why a spirit of unity is good, he leaves it to be found out by experience in what respects it is "pleasant ;" and, blessed be God, many have found, and multitudes are yet to find how pleasant it is, not only in itself, but in connection with reminiscences and anticipations, for brethren to dwell together in unity.

But let us not fail to advance, from the thoughts of David on this subject, to some of the expressions of the mind of David's Lord. Never let us forget that prayer in the upper room, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee ; that they also may be one in us ; *that*

the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

How inexpressibly weighty this crowning reason why it is good for brethren in Christ to dwell together in unity! Did unity, peace, and concord, as a clear moral atmosphere amid which to trace the precious influences of the glorious Gospel, more fully pervade the household of faith, what additional force would attend the call "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good!"

In order to this spirit the great pre-requisite is to be "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"—"brethren in the Lord." If we would realize more fully a spirit of Christian unity, it is of the utmost moment to seek more and more distinctly to realize a "spirit of adoption" by which to cry, "Abba, Father," and our spiritual relation to one another as "heirs together of the grace of life." Then would the way be clear for the more successful cultivation of a spirit of unity. And, if we would be nearer in spirit to each other in

the bonds of the Gospel, what need we but—above all—to be nearer in spirit to Him who in the hearing of the disciples said to the Father, “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.”

II.—HUMAN GREATNESS.



II.—HUMAN GREATNESS.

THE distinguished Philosopher, Dr. Thomas Reid, long ago remarked that “of all extremes of opinion, none are more dangerous than those that exalt the powers of man too high on the one hand, or sink them too low on the other ;” and, doubtless, much has been written in both directions of questionable tendency.

“What is man ?” What his origin ? His relations to the seen and unseen ? His capabilities ? His liabilities ? His possibilities ? Such are some of the questions that have intensely moved the minds of many in former times, and in our own day. In his physical being, God’s hand made him and fashioned him ; in his higher nature he is the “offspring” of “the Father of Spirits,” who says “All souls are mine.” When humanity was

about to exist, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

"Then chief o'er all his works below,
At last was Adam made;
His Maker's image blessed his soul,
And glory crowned his head."

But, "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall," man sinned; the glory departed, and his fallen nature, alienated from God, came under condemnation, and became in all its faculties disordered as well as tainted by sin. Sin, however, did not, and could not alter his place in the scale of creature existence, nor annihilate any faculty of his immortal being.

Job seems to have had deep impressions as to some kind of greatness in man when he said—7 : 17—"What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? or that thou shouldest *set thine heart* upon him?" In Psalm 144 we read, "Man is *like* unto vanity: *his days* are as a shadow that passeth away."

But, in connection with the question, "What

is man?" that occurs in the previous verse, the Psalmist does not say man *is* vanity, nor that *he* passeth away. On the contrary, he speaks in a way indicating his recognition of some greatness in man, saying "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him? or the Son of Man that thou *makest account* of him?" It is true that, in Psalm 62, the inspired writer says, "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree a deception; to be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity." He does not say so, however, in connection with the question, "What is man?" but in connection with quite a different consideration, namely this:—In what being may man safely put his trust? On that great matter the Psalmist teaches that to trust one's interests to men of low degree would be vanity, and to trust them to men of high degree would be found a deception, and that in the Lord alone may man safely trust. Hence the frequent use of the word "only"

in this grand Psalm ; as v. 5, 6. “ My soul, wait thou *only* upon God ”—“ He only is my rock, and my salvation.”

In the 8th Psalm, David distinctly and definitely deals with the question, “ What is man ? ” and, intensely considering the heavens, the moon and the stars, and man, his mind goes forth to the apprehension of man’s essential greatness. The heavens, what are they ? The work of God’s “ fingers ; ” the mere result of creative power. The moon and the stars, what are they ? Orbs that God has “ ordained ”—placed harmoniously by his power and wisdom in their respective orbits. But man—what is he ? More than merely a result of creative power and divine wisdom.

He is a being of whom God is “ mindful,” whom God *visits*. “ The heavens He stretcheth forth as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in ; ” and under that curtain He “ tabernacles with man ; ” a being greater far than the curtain of his habitation ;

and the conclusion at which he arrives is this—that man is a great being in the scale of creation—higher far than systems of worlds—so high as to be next in the scale to the highest—“Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels.”

And, great as is his place in the scale of creature existence, correspondingly great are his capabilities. It were vain to attempt even to name the diversified ways wherein the powers of the human mind have in the course of the ages been displayed.

Not only has it made a highway of the seas, but, by a variety of concomitant means it has made intellectual voyages to the far distant past, and, coming down the stream of time throughout successive centuries, has extracted from the rise and fall of nations and successive developments of human character, much in the way of warning, instruction and encouragement of a beneficial tendency in the various relations of human life. Man has

gradually detected laws of matter that had long been latent, and by invention and genius has turned them to such account as to render air, earth, and seas increasingly subservient to the interests of society. He can lay the hand of science on distant worlds, and rise in thought far beyond the utmost bounds of the sphere of the telescope. He can wander far and wide in the regions of hope, gather contributions from the far-off future into the consciousness of the present, and so feel "the powers of the world to come." He can receive into his mind great thoughts from the infinite mind, and be enabled to enter within the veil and commune with "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible." He who came "to save his people from their sins" and to conduct them to "eternal glory," wishes us to think of one human being as of more importance than "the whole world."

Now, in view of all this, *what an evil is sin!*
The more correct our apprehension of the

greatness of human nature, the more may we be impressed by a consideration of the enormity of that evil which wrenched it away from its God, disordered all its immortal faculties, and tends to its utter ruin—for “evil shall slay the wicked.”

Farther—*What cause we have for self-abasement!* True self-abasement is not founded on low views of man's essential being, but on scriptural views of what man has become *in character* through sin. Memory may be good as a faculty; but how often it is sinfully allowed to be a lumber-room or a receptacle of perilous explosives instead of being a treasury of truth Divine, and of impulses to proper action. Reason, judgment, and imagination may all be good as faculties, but, amid the light of the glorious Gospel, how sinfully the convictions of the reason are often violated, the dictates of the judgment disregarded, and the flights of the imagination indulged in sinful instead of God-

ward and heavenward directions ! There may be fine susceptibility of feeling ; but the feelings themselves how oft they cleave to the dust, instead of ascending to the chief good !

Then, *how great* “*the salvation of the Lord* ;” not only as displaying great wisdom, great mercy, great power, and a great sacrifice—the sacrifice of the Son of God ; but as the salvation of a great being from a great evil.

Finally.—*How great the gratitude we all owe to God*, for a nature of such grand possibilities ; and, above all, for provision in the economy of redemption for our being lifted up to be even “as the angels” for ever and ever.

III.—MORAL STRENGTH.





III.—MORAL STRENGTH.

THE love of power is implanted in our nature by Almighty God, but through sin it has become converted into a thirst for power with a view to the gratification of self, and not at all—unless in renewed natures—with a view to the honour of God. “The angels that excel in strength” are doubtless joyfully thankful for the power they possess, and love it as contributing to their fitness for high service of the King of Kings.

It is clear from Scripture that highly to value Divine power as really as Divine mercy in our behalf is acceptable to the “Eternal Godhead.” To Abraham, God said, “I am the Almighty God, walk before me.” He who through the inspired mind of a prophet proclaimed himself “mighty to save,” again and again said, “Believe ye that I am *able* to

do this?" and the first disciples were taught to value the gift of the promised Spirit as "*power* from on high."

So is it acceptable to God to be concerned, not only to "obtain mercy," but to be enabled to "put on strength." To Joshua He said, "Be strong and of a good courage." To Daniel He said, "O, man of God, greatly beloved, be strong; yea, be strong." By Haggai He said, "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, be strong, O Joshua, and be strong all ye remnant of the people, saith the Lord." To Timothy Paul said, "Be strong," and in epistle after epistle he said, "Brethren, be strong in the Lord." Now, as God has so repeatedly pressed upon souls the admonition to be strong, and as the Bible contains so much respecting this great matter, we may feel assured that—whilst prayer for strength is all-important—it behoves us to have an eye to the various means of obtaining it that are set forth or suggested by the Word of God.

And great, surely, is our need of increase of moral strength. When we think of the corrupt tendencies of our fallen nature that need to be opposed, the temptations to evil that need to be resisted, the allurements of "this present evil world" that need to be repelled, and the obstacles that need to be surmounted in "pressing towards the mark," and in aiming to be "labourers together with God," well may we feel our great need of being "strengthened with strength in the soul." Now, there are many passages of Scripture of peculiar value in this connection, and specially important are the following :—
"A man of knowledge increaseth strength."
As an instance of this take the Apostle Peter. Whilst his views in spiritual directions continued comparatively dim, and his knowledge of himself greatly defective, he had not strength of spirit corresponding to the ardour of his soul; but, when he had greatly increased in self-knowledge and in a

knowledge of Christ, "the power and wisdom of God," his career became marked by moral vigour, and he was so honoured of the Lord as to be enabled to "strengthen the brethren." The more we are aware of our own weakness, the more fully we apprehend truth as to the all-sufficiency and graciousness of the Divine Redeemer, and the depth and extent of our obligations, the more shall we be in the way of the increase of strength.

"The *way of the Lord* is strength to the upright." "In keeping his commandments there is great reward," and part of that reward is the increase of the moral power of the soul through the exercise of its faculties in aiming to do the will of God. "The glory of young men is their strength;" but where is the young man that would seek to grow in strength by merely paying regard to the *sustenance* of the bodily frame? Physical exercise and vigorous effort are essential to that increase of bodily strength that may be ob-

tained. So it is as to strength of soul. Hence it will be found that the more energetically there is engagement in Christian work, the more rapid will be the increase of moral strength. The weak in faith and in resolve are generally found to be those who may indeed wait on God in the ordinances of his house, but go not forth in spirit or in any active service "to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

"He that *hath clean hands* shall wax stronger and stronger." It has been recorded of a little boy that he was observed to wash his hands many times in a day, and that on being asked the reason why he said, "Because I wish to be strong. I read in the Bible that he that *hath clean hands* shall be stronger and stronger." It was explained to him that the passage was to be taken in a figurative sense, meaning that they who do right shall increase in strength to do right. Union is strength, and there can be no harmonious

co-operation of the faculties of the soul when conscience is moving in one direction and inclination and purpose in another. Isaiah said, "Your fingers are defiled with iniquity," and the Lord said, "When ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you." If, then, we would grow in strength we need to seek to have "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."

"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." When the "stripling" David went forth with a sling and a stone to meet his haughty and powerful opponent, his position apparently was one of appalling danger; but, actuated by high regard to the honour of "the Lord of Hosts," his trust was stedfast, his heart quailed not, his arm was not unnerved, and, with unchecked use of his practiced skill, and with firm force, "he prevailed over the Philistine" to a triumphant result. In quietness and confidence was his strength. And so it is in the various spheres of moral action.

If the motive be right, and the path of duty clear, and the "heart fixed trusting in the Lord," the spirit will be quiet and self-possessed, and invigorating influences will come in upon all the springs of action in the soul.

"*The joy of the Lord is your strength.*" That the joy of the Lord tends to invigorate the soul is grandly displayed by the spirit and life of the Apostle Paul. How clear that his rejoicing in the Lord had all along his apostolic career a marked power in connection with his bearing of great tribulation, and the accomplishment, in spite of all obstacles, of a great work.

"*They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.*" This is the crowning consideration that should move the soul in its endeavours to be strong. To wait upon the Lord, however, implies, not only prayer and supplication, but the pouring out of the heart before him, and grateful response to the gracious proclamation, "I will commune with

thee from above the mercy seat." And many are the ways in which that communion tends to moral strength. The very exercise therein of the higher faculties of the soul tends to their spiritual invigoration. And as communion with God, who is light and is love, tends to the advancement of knowledge, the quickening of the soul in the ways of the Lord, the purifying of the conscience from dead works, the increase of quietness and confidence and of joy in the Lord, in all these ways it tends to the increase of moral strength.

But above and beyond all this, they that wait on the Lord, who has promised "power" from on high—"the Holy Spirit to them that ask him," shall be "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man."

Deeply did David feel the need of being "endued with power from on high," when, looking up he exclaimed, "In thine hand it is to give strength unto all;" and benevo-

lently turning his thoughts to the children of men, said with all the earnestness of his soul, "Wait on the Lord : be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord."



IV.—“THE HOLY MOUNT.”



IV.—“THE HOLY MOUNT.”

GREATLY interesting is the fact that Jesus was transfigured on the mount only about a week after He had begun “to show unto his disciples that He must go unto Jerusalem, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Deeply saddened in soul by that intimation, how kindly seasonable the mighty influence over their spirit of the transfiguration of their Lord. “Jesus taketh with Him Peter, James and John, and bringeth them up into an high mountain, apart ;” and as in the accounts of the glorious events that followed, there are such special references to Peter, we may feel all the more interest in the matters of thought we are about to consider. Let us notice what Peter saw, heard, and said. What did he see ? *He saw Jesus “transfigured before them.”* Moses had seen some great

sights ; a bush “ burning with fire, and not consumed,” and the moral law written on two tablets of stone by “ the finger of God.” Elias had seen some great sights, as we learn from the Book of Kings. Peter, James and John had seen some great sights ; one of them was this—they had seen Jesus walking on the troubled waves of the Sea of Tiberias ! But, on the mount was a sight pre-eminently grand and glorious. “ His countenance did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” Of all the grand paintings of the renowned Raphael, that of the transfiguration is regarded as the finest ; but it was left unfinished. He may have felt that art and skill failed to give full expression to even his inadequate, however bright, conceptions of the great reality. Surely the appearance of the Saviour will be not less glorious in the heaven of heavens than it was on the mount ; and, as the bodies of the saints are to be changed and made “ like unto his glorious

body,” what a great sight will be “the marriage supper of the Lamb,” when He who “loved the church and gave Himself for it,” shall “present it to Himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”

He saw “Moses and Elias talking with Jesus.” How the disciples knew that the visitants from on high were Moses and Elias we have no means of telling, but that they did so seems to many minds greatly favourable to the idea of far-extended mutual recognition in the “house not made with hands.”

That it pleased the only wise God to confer on Moses and Elias the signal honour of being present at the transfiguration, opens up a wide and interesting field of thought. When Moses had to die on Mount Nebo without then entering the earthly Canaan, he little knew of the greater honour of the visit to it in the “fulness of time” that awaited him : and, when we consider how closely his name is

associated with that of Jesus — as in the statement “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,”—and that he was a signal type of the Saviour who delivers from a bondage greater far than that of Egypt, and leads to a country better far than that of Canaan, can we wonder that he was one of the two so greatly honoured of the Lord when Jesus was transfigured? And in regard to Elias, one of the grandest of the prophets, and who was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, was he not a fit representative of those “holy men of God,” collectively of whom Peter said after the Saviour’s ascension, “To Him gave all the Prophets witness?” Such are some of the considerations furnished by Scripture, whence gleams of light come in upon the mind as to some of the probable reasons why it pleased Him who is “wondrous in counsel and excellent in working” to commission Moses and Elias rather than any other of the inhabitants of heaven to be

visibly present on the mount of transfiguration.

Further—*He saw a "bright cloud."* Matthew says, "while he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them ;" and Luke says, "They feared as they entered into the cloud." The words in the original translated in this statement by the word "they," are not the same. The meaning is this:—"They" (the disciples) "feared as *those* entered into the cloud." Outside the cloud, the disciples gazed on its brightness. Beautiful and suggestive truth — it was *a "bright cloud."* Jehovah "maketh clouds his chariot." It was so under the Old Testament dispensation and is so still ; but, now that "the Sun of Righteousness" has risen, a great light not only to a fallen world, but in the universe at large, how different the clouds ! The holy one of Israel gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai amid "darkness, clouds and thick darkness," but indicated his presence on the mount of

transfiguration by a bright cloud. There is mystery amid the glories of Gospel day. "Great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh ;" and many are the mysteries of the Kingdom that is not of this world ; but they are irradiated by Him who is light and love ; the clouds are bright with the beams of "the Sun of Righteousness."

But what did Peter *hear* on the mount ? "Moses and Elias talked with Jesus of his decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Did Peter hear that conversation ? If he did, how indescribable its influence over his spirit ! It indicates how transcendent is the interest of the inhabitants of the upper world in the sacrifice of the Son of God, and in the view of the Saviour's death which seems specially to have engaged the thoughts of Moses and Elias—that the death He was to die *He himself would accomplish*. True, He was "crucified and slain," yet was it purely voluntary. "He loved us, and gave Himself for us."

But, whether Peter did or did not hear that wondrous conversation, we know that *he heard a voice out of the cloud saying "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him."* Ages before that great day, Moses had been led by the Spirit to say of the promised Messiah "Him shall ye hear in all things," and on the mount the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour said to the disciples "Hear ye Him:"—a charge full of momentous meaning as to the superiority of Jesus to Moses and the Prophets, the authority with which He was mediatorially clothed, and the regard which "the Father of mercies" wishes to be paid to the words of Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life."

But there was another voice that Peter heard on the mount. After the disciples, overawed, had fallen "on their face," after Moses and Elias had left, after the cloud had disappeared, "*Jesus said arise, and be not afraid.*" Precious manifestation of the mind

of the Lord, whose loving kindness is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever! To the disciples on the troubled sea, to the women on the resurrection morning, to John in Patmos, He said, "Be not afraid," and to all his disciples on earth He said, and is saying, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Amid the great sights that Peter saw and the momentous words that he heard on the mount, what did he say? "*Lord it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias.*" What he said respecting three tabernacles evidently arose not from consideration, but overpowering gladness; "he knew not what he said." But the expression, "Lord, it is good to be here" had in it greater fulness of meaning than was realized at the time by Peter. It was good on many accounts, specially as a season of signal confirmation of faith in the Messiah-

ship of Jesus ; as is clear from the words of Peter many years afterwards, when he said—2 Peter, i.—“ We have not followed cunningly devised fables—we were eye-witnesses of his majesty when there came to Him such a voice from the excellent glory, ‘ This is my beloved Son.’ And this voice we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.”

Not very long after the transfiguration, the faith of those three disciples was to be greatly tested. The time of the Saviour’s agony was approaching. Peter, James, and John, were to be near Him ; and they would be all the more prepared without failure of faith to be eye-witnesses of his agony from having been “ eye-witnesses of his majesty.”

To those who “ have not seen, and yet have believed,” how pleasing and precious the assurance “ Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty !” To many who have believed and to whom the Saviour is precious, the hour of their departure, however bright with

hope, is on some accounts inexpressibly touching. But, "absent from the body" they are "present with the Lord"—to feel, with fulness of joy, uninterruptedly and forever, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

V.—THE AFFLICTED'S PRAYER.



V.—THE AFFLICTED'S PRAYER.

WHAT is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto Him? are questions suggestive of animating thought to those in sympathy with the spirit of David, who said, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." Nothing can be more highly reasonable than prayer to "the Lord, the true God and everlasting King," who has graciously revealed a divinely appointed connection between the offering of prayer and the impartation of blessing. "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." True prayer, springing from the depths of the soul, offered in the name and ascending through the mediation of Jesus, enters the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth, is attended with

the prevailing intercession of the Son of God, is received into association with the thoughts of the infinite mind, and has to do with the movements of the unseen hand that rends veils from darkened understandings, loosens fetters from enslaved souls, opens hearts as was opened the heart of Lydia, pours the balm of consolation into afflicted spirits, binds up the wounds of broken-hearted ones, and administers to immortal spirits of the blessings of the "everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure."

But our special object in this address is to consider the great value and importance of prayer amid afflictions. We do not wonder that the Bible contains so many references to affliction ; for, it is not more true that "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward," than that "the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." Of the Scripture directions to the afflicted there are three of very special moment. One of them has reference to *the*

feelings—"My son, despise thou not the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of Him;" another refers to *the thoughts*—"In the day of adversity consider;" a third has reference to *the whole soul*—"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray." Let the whole soul be thoughtfully and feelingly affected thereby, and let the movements of the soul take a Godward direction; let him pray.

Now, in so doing, what are the special objects that should be kept steadily in view? It is right to pray, in a spirit of submission, for removal of affliction. It may be removed, as in the case of Hezekiah; or it may be continued, as in the case of Paul, who besought the Lord thrice that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him, and to whom the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is right to pray for consolation from Him who says, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you;"

and for support from Him who proclaims "I will strengthen thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." But, if we would "glorify the Lord in the fires," and derive therefrom true and permanent benefit, we need to ponder Scripture representations of the great ends of sanctified affliction, with a view to the guidance of our spirit in waiting upon God. And what are the great ends which, according to Scripture, afflictions rightly improved are calculated and mercifully intended to accomplish?

One end is *instruction*. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of thy law." When the afflicted "hear the rod, and him that appointed it, he openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction." Many besides the Psalmist have felt "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Luther said, "I never knew the meaning of the Word of God till I was afflicted; then

the discovery of divine truth to my soul was like opening the gates of paradise." So, multitudes more. Let us pray, then, in regard to *lessons*—whilst in the school of affliction.

Another end is *correction*. Job said, "Happy is the man whom God correcteth." David said, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." How sad when waves and billows of a sea of trouble pass over a soul without loosening away from it any evil thing! How important to pray that affliction may have a corrective influence over the spirit.

Another end is *prevention*. Paul said, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh." A person who had been benighted and entangled in a wood till break of day, discovered at early dawn that he was almost close to a fearful precipice; and then the

trials of a few dark hours were thankfully felt to have been merciful prevention. So it may be with many of the afflictions of this life. Let the afflicted pray that their trials may be so sanctified to their souls as to keep them from greater troubles.

Another end is *preparation for greater usefulness*. Such was one of the benefits realized by Paul who benevolently and devoutly said, "Who comforteth us in all our afflictions that we may be able to comfort them who are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." How suggestive this to Christians who ardently wish to be more fitted for usefulness in the various relations of life.

Another end is *the brightening of hope*. To this end affliction was blessed to Paul, who said, "We glory in tribulations also ; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope ;" and many have become enabled in the fur-

nace of affliction to read their title clear "to mansions in the skies." Let afflicted ones who "stand in doubt" as to their interest in Christ pray for a benefit so great, through sanctified affliction, as the brightening of a hope "full of immortality."

But the crowning end is *sanctification*. "This is all the fruit to take away sin." He "whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem, sits as a refiner, and purifies them as gold and silver." Let us be "in subjection" to the Father of spirits, and pray that his chastisements may be "for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness"—"without which no man shall see the Lord."

There are those who are heavily afflicted, and yet remain "far from God." Let them pray to Him who is waiting to be gracious, and who said, "I have smitten you with blasting and mildew, yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord."

Let them seek to be far away from resem-

blance to those of whom it is said "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved ; they refused to return."

The writer repeatedly visited a young person in a hospital, who had been led by affliction to cry "What must I do to be saved?" At length one morning he found her sitting up on her bed, the tears on her cheeks, and an open Bible on her pillow ; and with great joy she pointed to the words—Ezek. 20, 37—"And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant."

VI.—THE RE-ASSURANCE OF PETER.



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VERY instructive is the life of Simon, son of Jonas, who became Peter the Apostle. When John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God," two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus. One of them was Andrew. "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias : and he brought him to Jesus." Fine instance of a brother's usefulness. The first instance, too, of a disciple bringing any one to the Saviour.

The many striking incidents in the life of Peter, his emphatic avowal of belief in the Messiahship of Jesus, the abrupt, yet loving and tender expression of his aversion to the idea of the Saviour's crucifixion, his readiness to step on the waves of the sea at the bidding

of his Lord, all indicated the ardour and impulsiveness of his nature.

Never hypocritical, he was during the earlier stages of his career over-confident in the strength and steadfastness of his better feelings and sincerely indulged purposes ; and, failing sadly in reflection and true humility, he had to be humbled in the dust, and driven to an earnest realization of his utter dependence on divine strength, before he became fitted for the exalted position of honour and usefulness to which he was ultimately to be raised.

About seven weeks before the interview we are about to consider, Peter, after following Jesus "afar off," thrice denied Him. The tenderness and love of the Saviour and the mighty power of his Spirit melted Peter to tears, and not only kept him from sinking into despondency, but thoroughly recovered his soul. After Jesus had died on the cross and risen from the tomb, an angel was

employed to instruct Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to go and tell his disciples *and Peter* that He was risen from the dead ; and the fact that Peter was named in particular beautifully indicates how considerate, deep and tender is the sympathy of the Son of God. But Peter needed more than sympathy. He needed faithful words to keep memory in proper exercise, to deepen sense of obligation, and to help his whole soul to steadfastness prospectively ; and by such faithfulness was he lovingly befriended, as we learn from the last chapter of the Gospel by John. Andrew Fuller remarks, " He might expect to have lost his office, but no, he shall be restored ;" and Dr. McKnight says, " Peter by his late cowardice and perfidy, having, as it were, abdicated the Apostleship, was formally restored to his office through the indulgence of his kind and merciful Master."

When the time of the Saviour's ascension

was drawing nigh, He spread, at once faithfully and lovingly, the influence of his spirit over the whole soul of his servant, in connection with settling in Peter's mind the assurance that he was still to be employed in the service of his Lord. The questions put to Peter on that great occasion were three; and how awakening to his memory! How striking and arousing to his conscience! How humbling to his whole soul! As the Saviour, instead of saying Peter, said, "Simon, son of Jonas," the memory of Peter would instantly recall his life as a fisherman and the love of Jesus in then receiving him, and deeply must he have felt how gratitude had failed him in testing times. When the words fell on his ear, "*Lovest thou me more than these?*" he would think instantly of the season when, trusting more in himself than in his brethren, he said, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will not I be offended," and must have felt humbled indeed. When

Jesus said the second time, "Lovest thou me?" without adding the words "more than these," as much as to say, "Lovest thou me *at all?*" the spirit of Peter must have been yet more deeply humbled. And when the question was a third time pressed on his mind, with what fulness of feeling he must have recognized the fact that Jesus was thinking of his having thrice denied Him! Three times did Peter say in reply, "Thou knowest that I love Thee;" and on that throbbing spirit Jesus laid the charge, "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep," "Feed my sheep."

In this great commission the charge was threefold; and weighty as it was, it doubtless filled the soul of Peter with gladness. It was pre-eminently *reassuring*; it involved indication of full forgiveness, of a gracious design to own and honour him still, to take him anew into co-operation with himself in the highest sphere of beneficence known amongst mankind.

Every part of the charge teems with precious meaning. The first part, "Feed my lambs," tells of the Saviour's tender regard to the young, and specially of his love to the lambs in his fold. That Peter in particular should be called on to feed the lambs may indicate some peculiar *fitness*—from temperament, or experience, or both—for that special department of Christian work. At first sight some might suppose that the loving disciple, John, would be regarded as specially adapted for that service ; but, however high his qualifications, there were reasons in the mind of Him who is "the wisdom of God" why on the Apostle Peter should be laid the charge "Feed my lambs." Does it not seem probable that the glowing ardour of his spirit was one reason, and his deep experience of the danger of self-confidence another ? Feelingly indeed would he be able to speak to the young in the spirit of the words, "Be clothed with humility," "Let him that think-

eth he standeth take heed lest he fall," "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might."

The second part of the charge is thus translated—"Feed my sheep;" but in the original the verb is different from that used in the first part of the charge, and of a much wider import, as recognized by Peter himself where he says (1 Pet. 5 : 2) "Feed the church of God, taking the oversight thereof." The third part of the charge is peculiarly interesting on this account, that in it is a recurrence to the word employed in the charge respecting the lambs, by which Peter might be reminded that the nourishment in the divine life of more advanced Christians is as really to be regarded as that of younger disciples.

In view of all this, how important that under-shepherds should seek to be filled with the Spirit "that searcheth all things, even the deep things of God," that they may be able to furnish "meat" as well as "milk," and,

bringing forth "things new and old," may help advanced Christian minds to be "filled with a knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

As this commission was to have reference to the work of Peter after the Saviour's ascension, it was not needful that it should be given at an earlier period, and room was thus afforded for such a manifestation of the spirit of Christ as was calculated to be of great value to all his followers. Between the morning of the resurrection and the day on which Peter was thus addressed, Jesus had repeatedly appeared to him and other disciples. Again and again had He said, "Peace be unto you ;" but we have no reason to suppose that He had ever, in the course of all the forty days, made any reference to the conduct of Peter in the Palace of the High Priest.

What a view is hereby afforded of the tenderness of the Saviour, of his slowness to touch on subjects painful to the hearts of his

disciples ! Precisely the same spirit is apparent in the messages to the seven churches in Asia. Whatever he could approve in any of those churches he named *first* ; and then, as with tender reluctance, referred in faithfulness to what was wanting or needed to be put away. How comforting the thought of this amid our manifold deficiencies, and how important this part of the Saviour's example to all his followers ! To be quick to notice and appreciate the excellencies of others, and slow to speak of their defects, unless as far as faithfulness to them and to "the truth" may require, is clearly according to the mind of Christ.

But especially let us lay to heart the question, " Lovest thou me ? " Sad and affecting is the fact that in this probationary state the affections of many immortal spirits are running utterly to waste. Many, amid the light of nature and revelation, are more interested in objects that are only types or symbols of

the Saviour than in the Saviour Himself. To some, any plant rather than the "plant of renown," any rose rather than "the rose of Sharon," any light rather than "the Sun of Righteousness," any star rather than "the bright and morning star" of everlasting day!

Let us be daily looking to Jesus. Let us think of the love "that passeth knowledge," and may that love constrain us to love Him who first loved us, and to live, not to ourselves but to Him who proclaims, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

VII.—SAUL'S CONVERSION.



VII.—SAUL'S CONVERSION.

AT the martyrdom of Stephen "the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul," and at the death of that first Christian martyr the spirit of persecution, far from being satisfied, was thereby kindled into greater ardour. After devout men had carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him, "Saul made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women, committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."

Now, that so many were scattered, Saul casts his thoughts all around, and they become fixed on Damascus, the capital of Syria, where were many Jews, some of whom had embraced Christianity, and whither some

of the scattered had repaired. "Saul went unto the High Priest and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem;" and so commissioned he sets off for Damascus. Reports had reached that city respecting Saul, and whilst he was on his way thither the Christians therein were full of apprehension, and giving themselves to prayer. Saul entered Damascus, not, however, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," but humble and lowly minded, in a state of temporary blindness, but with new light in his soul, led in paths that his spirit had not previously known. Three accounts of his conversion are contained in the New Testament. See Acts 9, 22, and 26 chapters. As Saul was advancing in his journey, what intensity of thought and purpose and vividness of anticipation as to what he would do, and how his

return to Jerusalem would be hailed, must have moved his determined mind. But, as the "raging waves of the sea" had been hushed into silence at the bidding of Him who said "Peace, be still," so a sudden change came over the spirit of Saul, reminding us of the words of the Lord, "Here shall thy proud waves be stayed." "Suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven." In reply to the amazing question, "Why persecutest thou me?" he said, "Who art thou, Lord?" and after hearing the words, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest," conviction of the Messiahship of Jesus seized his soul. No longer enslaved by Pharisaism and prejudice, he became delivered from the power of darkness, and under the grace of Him who is "mighty to save," yielded his whole soul to the force of truth. With thorough conviction came thorough compliance. Convinced that Jesus was the Christ, his judgment, his conscience, his

will, his whole heart, all the faculties and moral susceptibilities of his soul promptly went over to the side of the Saviour and his cause, and the spirit of what he then said pervaded the whole of his subsequent life—and will pervade it for ever—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And how did the Saviour deal with the self-surrender of Saul? He received him graciously and placed him under further instructions. "He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink," and "Behold, he prayeth." But who is to help the thoughts of a convert so gifted with talent, and so distinguished a scholar? Will not some of the most eminent of the Apostles be led by the Spirit of Christ to perform such service? No, no. One of the Christian converts at Damascus is to be employed. Ananias, with warm-heartedness and all the ardour of fresh Christian affections, can go to him with what was exactly suited to his need—a warm sympathy and

fraternal welcome to "*brother Saul.*" Acts 7:19. What encouragement to all Christians to seek to be useful to souls!

Lord Lyttelton and many others have very legitimately treated of Saul's conversion with its antecedents and subsequences as constituting a very powerful argument in favour of the truth of Christianity, but no views of that conversion advanced by any subsequent writer can reasonably be expected to be of such value as those that have been placed on record by the convert himself. Why so? For two great reasons conjointly. He could speak of it from personal experience of the great event, and he has done so, not only as a matter of experience, but under divine guidance as an inspired apostle.

We close, then, with looking at the question, *What says Paul of his own conversion?*

1st. That it was *of pure grace—of sovereign mercy.*

Repeatedly and very prominently did he

present this view of the great change effected in his soul by grace and power divine. Many expressions of his grateful and adoring spirit in that direction might be quoted, but one of them only we name, 1 Tim. 1:13—"I, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious, *obtained mercy.*" Looking into his past experience from amid the light of the Gospel, he declared with all the truthfulness of a Christian and an apostle (Acts 26:9), "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." But if he really *thought* he was right, and feels that *mercy* had come to him, he clearly felt that man is accountable for his *belief*. Guilty he had been; not, however, from acting contrary to conviction, but contrary to *truth*, and in that he regarded himself as having been sinful.

In discussing the great subject of "the accountableness of man for his belief," the late Dr. Wardlaw said, "In the theory of

responsibility for belief there are three things that appear unitedly indispensable, as the only basis on which it can rest, viz.: Capacity of understanding, opportunity of knowledge and sufficiency of evidence ;” and every one of these was either in the possession or within the reach of Saul of Tarsus. Amid the light of nature man is accountable for his belief in God. If we may indulge the imagination of a disembodied soul saying, “O God, I did not serve Thee because I did not believe in thine existence. In the great temple of nature I did not bow down and worship, because I did not know that there was a divinity in it”—whether that would or would not be a satisfactory exculpation, “hear ye the word of the Lord,” Romans 1:20, “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are *without excuse*.” And, amid the light of

revelation, man is accountable for a belief in God as "a just God and a Saviour," as "God in Christ," who said, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins."—John 8:24.

2nd. Paul was led by the Spirit to present this view of his conversion, that his having obtained mercy had some connection with the fact that before his conversion he did not believe in the Messiahship of Jesus. In 1 Tim. 1:13 he says, "I obtained mercy *because I did it ignorantly through unbelief.*" Sinful as Saul had been, he never was guilty of the great sin of neglecting the great salvation after believing in the truth of Christianity; and this consideration should shake to the utmost depths and fill with most serious apprehension every soul that is conscious of believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the only Saviour, and yet remains far from Him!

3rd. Another view that Paul was led to

take of his conversion was this (1 Tim. 1:16), "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering for a *pattern* to them who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." The Saviour had previously said to his disciples (Matt. 5:44), "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you," and, by having mercy on Saul of Tarsus, He wonderfully added to the admonition the force of his own example.

4th. He regarded himself as called by the grace of the Lord, not for his own sake only, but that he might be an instrument of good to many others. The Lord said (Acts 9:15), "He is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the Children of Israel." He himself said (Gal. 1) "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me, *that I might preach Him among the heathen,*" and need we add that all Christians should habitually keep in remembrance that the

Lord has called them by his grace, not for their own sakes only, but to serve their generation "according to the will of God?"

There seems to be a real and striking analogy between the city of Jericho and the soul of Saul. At an early period in the progress of the Israelites towards taking possession of Canaan, it pleased the only wise God that Jericho should fall before them without human instrumentality, and so did He teach the surrounding peoples and impress upon the Israelites that (Ps. 44:3) "They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them." So at an early period in the history of the Christian Church it pleased Him who is "the wisdom of God" to cause that prominent opposing power, the soul of Saul, to fall before Him without human instrumentality, and so did He teach the world and impress upon the Church the truth that it is not by human might or power, but by higher influence, that souls are won to Himself.

VIII.—SELF-INSPECTION.





VIII.—SELF-INSPECTION.

SOLOMON said—Ecc. 8 : 9—“ I apply myself to every thing that is done under the sun ;” and respecting one part of what came under his notice he said, “ Then I saw and considered it well ; I looked upon it and received instruction.” And certainly to look out far and wide on the state of the world, to ponder the many specially important events of our age, and to observe the signs of the times that are passing over us, are habits of thought that commend themselves to every reasonable mind.

But, in our day, such are the facilities for the flight of intelligence from different parts of the world, that, amid the multitudinous newspaper, telegraphic, and other news that crowd in upon the minds of men, there is no small danger of the thoughts and feel-

ings being *disproportionately* taken up with the extrinsic, and the real state of "the world within" greatly overlooked.

As our days are "swifter than a weaver's shuttle," as our life is "as a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanisheth away," and as "every one of us must give account of himself to God," very pressing is the importance of *self-inspection*.

Richard Baxter remarked, "I have found by long experience as well as from Scripture, that the main difficulty lieth in bringing men to be willing, and to set themselves in good earnest to the searching of their hearts." There are many passages of Scripture that imply, and not a few that expressly refer to the danger of neglect of self-inspection. Repeatedly did Moses and the Prophets say, "Take heed to yourselves." Again and again did Jesus say to the disciples, "Take ye heed to yourselves;" and it would be an interesting and profitable exercise of mind to trace the

varied connections in which that admonition is found in different parts of the Word of God.

Every reader of this address might say with truth, "There is one being in existence that will never be saved unless in connection with *my* personal regard to the salvation of that one individual. Any or all of those dear to me on earth and any of my cotemporaries may be saved without any efforts or prayers of mine in their behalf, but one being there is that will never be saved—whatever the efforts and prayers of others—unless *I* be led to care about the salvation of that one being—and that being is *myself*." How important, then, is self-inspection! It should include consideration of our state in relation to the past, the present, and the future.

Ecc. 3:15—"God requireth that which is *past*."

Some reader of this address may possibly feel; yes—and well may that warning be appalling to my soul—looking back, my ill-

spent time, and course of life, present to my mind a most melancholy scene ; sins indulged, mercies slighted, the heart hardened, the conscience seared, and, I fear, that for me “there is no hope.”

But if the Father of Spirits “delighteth in mercy” (Micah 7 : 18), and “spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Rom. 8 : 32); and if “his dear Son, who hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us” (Eph. 5 : 2), “for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,” and proclaims “him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out”—then may sinners, even the chief, rejoice in hope, assured that “the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death” (Ps. 33).

“ Oh, if the wanderer his mistake discern,
Judge his own ways, and sigh for a return,
Bewildered once, must he bewail his loss,
For ever and for ever? No ! the cross !

There and there only (tho' the deist rave,
And atheist, if there be so base a slave),
There and there only is the power to save ;
There no delusive hope invites despair,
No mocking meets you, no deception there."

But, to the praise and glory of his grace, many can say "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness for sins ;" and they also need self-inspection in their relation to the past. Are past mercies, past warnings, past lessons kept in lively remembrance? The Israelites "remembered not the multitude of God's mercies, but provoked Him at the sea—even at the Red Sea."

Peter probably failed of self-inspection in regard to the warning, "Satan hath desired to have you," and how sad was his fall ; and to the disciples Jesus repeatedly said, "Do ye not remember?" To not a few, oppressed with cares and painful apprehensions, it might with propriety be said, Do ye not remember gracious realities in your experience, that

warrant you to feel "if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life?"

"His love in times past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink ;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure to lead me quite
through."

But the state of the soul *connected with the present* calls for vigilant self-inspection. It was well said by Sydney Smith, "The great labour is to subdue the tyranny of present impressions ; to hold down desire and aversion with a firm grasp, till we have time to see where they would drive us. The men who can do this, are the men who do all the praiseworthy actions that are done in the world."

Let us listen to the divine word by Joshua and Jude. Josh. 23:11—"Take good heed to yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God." Jude 20, 21—"But ye, beloved, build-

ing yourselves up in your holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God." "There are many adversaries;" opposing powers from within, from around, from beneath; and "they are confederate against thee." What self-inspection, what watchful and prayerful care are requisite if we would keep near in spirit to "the Captain of Salvation," who says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

"He gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world;" and what self-inspection is needed as to the influence in the world of our spirit and life, and as to the influence of the world *over us*.

But we must pass on to some brief references to the importance of self-inspection *in our relations to the future*. Can we read our title clear "to mansions in the skies?" If not, are we giving diligence to make our "calling and election sure?" 2nd Peter, 1:10.

Are we habitually alive to the assurance that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and that "our Saviour Jesus Christ gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?"

In regard to the unknown future of *this* life, do we feel like David (Ps. 71:15), "I will go *in the strength* of the Lord God?" Are we duly yielding our spirit to the influence of the words of the Apostle Paul (1st Cor. 7:27), "Brethren, the time is short?" Pondering that truth, the same Apostle said, "It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed;" as if he had said, "Brethren, we shall soon be home to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and let us see to it that we be alive to what we should aim to do on earth before being "lifted up for ever."

There were times in the life of David, when he seems deeply to have felt that with all

his self-inspection there might be mingled *misapprehension* of the real state of his soul. Whilst he knew and felt that in many things he failed and was sinful, he was conscious of aiming to pursue *a right way*; but, knowing that the heart is deceitful, and his knowledge of himself was very imperfect, and that the great and merciful God knew him altogether and was waiting to be gracious, he lifted up his thoughts from himself to the great Supreme, and said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be *any wicked way* in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

IX.—THE FATAL DREAM.



IX.—THE FATAL DREAM.

THAT there is much in this life like a dream, is an idea that has extensively pervaded the thoughts of men.

“ The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all that we inherit, shall dissolve :
And, like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.”

Lord Chesterfield had some miserable moods and sometimes considerably thoughtful ones: and in one of them he expressed himself thus in a letter to a friend: “ When I reflect upon what I have seen and heard, I can hardly persuade myself that all the pomp and pleasures of the world can be a reality. But I look upon all that is past as one of those thousand dreams opium commonly

occasions, and I do not wish to repeat the noxious dose for the sake of the vagaries occasioned thereby. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy state with that manliness which most people boast of? I bear it because I must bear it whether I will or not. I think of nothing but of killing time the best way I can. It is my resolution, therefore, to sleep in a carriage during the remainder of my journey." And so it was his resolution to get all the ease and comfort he could connected with dreaming away a life, the proper object of which would have been—shaking off slumber—to prepare to meet God.

Of the ungodly man we read in Job 20:8, "He shall fly away as a dream." *While it lasts*, the life of such is like a dream.

In a dream the faculties of the mind, neither fully awake nor utterly locked up in unconsciousness, are in a state of partial activity, and more or less afloat in the regions of fancy ;

but the great peculiarity of a dream is this, that the highest reason is asleep.

In a dream memory often looks into the past, hope and fear into the future, pleasure or pain may be the consciousness of the present, and there often is, too, a sort of judging and choosing ; but the highest reason is shrouded in slumber ;—so that, in a dream, what would astonish the person, if awake, leaves the mind calm, and inconsistencies that in a wakeful state could not be believed for a moment, do not at all similarly affect the mind in a dream.

So in the life of an ungodly man. Memory may turn to the past, hope or fear to the future, and there may be a sort of judging and choosing also ; but what astonishes heaven astonishes not the dreamer. In his soul can be harboured the most flagrant inconsistencies whilst he continues to hope on that all will be well. He can walk on in the broad road, and have visionary ideas of at last being

found at the end of the narrow one. He can continue moving on amid darkness, and all the while anticipate the world of bliss, where there is no darkness at all. He can serve sin, and have the idea of being at last with the Saviour—whose name is called Jesus because “He shall save his people from their sins.” He can slight the cross, and hope to wear the crown. He can sow the wind, and, amid the shadowy delusions of his soul, he can be free from serious apprehensions of reaping the whirlwind. Is it not like a dream? *At its close*, it is so also.

The great peculiarity of the close of a dream is this—that the dreamer has no power of preventing himself from being awoke out of his dream. He may be awoke by some alarming event or by some trifling occurrence: by the crash of a mansion in flames or by the buzz of a fly. So the ungodly man has no power to prevent himself from flying away as a dream. When Jehovah, who slum-

bereth not nor sleepeth, may be pleased to send the summons, and whether the summons come by some imposing or scarcely observable messenger, the moment it comes the dream is gone.

“Ah ! whence is that flame which now bursts on his eye ?

Ah ! what is that sound that now larums his ear ?

’Tis the lightning’s red glare, painting hell on the sky !

’Tis the crashing of thunders, the groan of the sphere !”

In the retrospect it is like a dream.

In a dream all seems reality ; but, after it is gone how unsubstantial it appears. And whatever an ungodly man may think of his present life, if he were suddenly to awake out of that dream into eternity, “all the days of this his vain life,” how unsubstantial would they appear ! with what bitterness of spirit, what remorse, what woe, would he remember the misimprovement of his probationary state as an immortal being !

If awake to newness of life, let the incense of grateful praise ascend to God. “ You hath

He quickened." But what shall be said to those in the deep sleep of an unregenerate state? Shall it be said "sleep on now, and take your rest"—while the soul is unrenewed, sin unpardoned, and the "king of terrors" may be near? Who would wish to be awoke by the "king of terrors?" Would you not rather wish to awake at the call of Him who hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, who waiteth to be gracious, who "spared not his own Son but delivered Him up for us all," and in whose Word we read "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

X.—AUTUMN.



X.—AUTUMN.

AS time flies, we should listen to its voice.

“ Redeem mine hours, the space is brief,
 Whilst in my glass the sand grains shiver ;
And measureless thy joy or grief,
 When time and thou shall part for ever.”

As day unto day, so season after season
“ uttereth speech ;” whence may be gathered
suggestions and analogies of a useful tendency
for both worlds.

“ These as they change, Almighty Father,
 These are but the varied God. The rolling
Year is full of Thee.”

Let us view autumn as a season

I.—OF GRATIFICATIONS.

Remembering the recent “plenteous harvest” and the favourable weather for the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, what

cause have we all to feel thankful gratification.

The earth and the fulness thereof are the Lord's, who crowneth the year with his goodness; and the feeling expressed by the poet Thompson may well be widely cherished in this favoured land—

“Think—O grateful think—
How good the God of harvests is to you.”

The autumn of human life, too, may be a season of gratification. They who in youth sow to the Spirit, and in whose moral nature is first the blade, then the ear, and then the full or filling corn in the ear, may anticipate true gratification in the autumn of life from grateful recollections, from ripening fruits of the Spirit, and from the well-grounded character of their hope of glory everlasting. In view of all this, how blessed is early piety! Should the eyes of any one in the resfreshness of early life fall on these pages, let such feel assured that whatever else may be matter of

regret some future day, or of lamentation in eternity, there is no danger of any one ever being sorry for feeling like Obadiah—1 Kings, 18:12—"I fear the Lord from my youth." "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son"—Prov. 10:5—but, if you would do so, you must sow in spring; and "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself," Prov. 9:12.

II.—OF LAMENTATIONS.

It was so in Judah and Jerusalem when the lamentation was uttered, Jer. 8:20—"The harvest is past; the summer is ended; and we are not saved." Jehovah had said "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place;" but "no man repented of the wickedness, saying, what have I done?" Persisting in sin, they brought judgment on themselves; and, with infatuation like that of holding up conductors to thunder clouds, they added sin to sin; till at length—"the snorting of horses was heard

from Dan"—the Chaldean cavalry were approaching—"the whole land trembled." Then came the lamentation—mainly, however, on account of what was threatening from without—little, if at all, over *their own conduct*.

How much of similar lamentation in the experience of many *in the autumn of life!* But, as such lamentation was then of no avail in Judea, neither is it now unless in so far as it becomes lamentation *over sins*. Those in the autumn of life who are yet "without God in the world" should consider how much they might have had of blessing now wholly beyond their reach. How much they have lost is known only to Him who proclaims "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousnesses as the waves of the sea!"

But they should also consider what gratitude they owe to God for sparing mercy. Though "not saved," they are not yet "with-

out remedy." God is long suffering and hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" and to those that have long slighted his offered mercy He still proclaims in his great forbearance, Isaiah 1—"Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come *now* and let us reason together saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool."

III.—OF BEAUTIES.

Whilst spring is beautiful with promise, and summer with divine bounty, autumn has its beauties also. The richness of hue, the exquisite variety of tint and shade, the mellow fruit on the bending branches, and much else on the face of nature in autumn present a mature expression of real beauty. Now, there is a moral beauty analagous to this, observable more or less frequently in the autumn of the life of those who are trees of the Lord's

right hand planting. When their Christian character becomes more and more enriched in its different branches by the ripening "fruits of righteousness," what observer can fail to discern that, amid the signs of bodily decay, they are becoming beautified with salvation, and prepared to be transplanted to "the paradise of God?" Not a few instances of such moral beauty are now observable, but, under divine grace, they will yet appear far more abundantly in the Church, the garden of the Lord. Let such as rejoice in believing that they have become "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified," consider this matter, and do so in connection with earnest reference to the words of Jesus—"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

IV.—OF MEMENTOS.

Viewed in that particular light, moralists and poets have from age to age extracted

from it pleasing and profitable thought. But, let it specially be noted that the God of nature and of all grace led one and another of his inspired servants to refer to autumn as a season of mementos—presenting to view much that may profitably remind us that we too are changing and in a transition state. Many in all grades of society would do well to take heed to the faithful but withering words of the Divine proclamation “Woe to the crown of pride, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower;” and they that have weathered many a storm and are yet fresh and vigorous, should never allow an autumn season to pass away without laying to heart the words of Isaiah, “*Ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth*”—and the strong and the weak, the high and the low, the old and the young, are all taught to feel “we all do fade as a leaf.”

How precious the truth that there is much in this changing world that is *unfading*. Of

the godly we read "His leaf also shall not wither;" and "they that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing;" and after being lifted up for ever, the "inheritance," the "crown of glory," the "beauty of holiness," will "never fade away."

XI.—WINTER.



XI.—WINTER.

THE seasons of the year are highly suggestive. So felt the devout and sweet singer of Israel when he said "*Thou* renewest the face of the earth"—"*Thou* crownest the year with thy goodness"—"*Thou* hast made summer and winter."

In *Spring*, when genial warmth, and vegetable life, and the blossom and the bud, and the songs among the branches, come in upon the human heart with their welcome influences, how well to consider whether "the dayspring from on high" has had a welcome to our spirit, and the coldness of our moral nature been removed by the rays of "the Sun of Righteousness."

In *Summer*, when "the valleys are covered over with corn," how important to consider what growth is advancing in our souls. "The

mind untaught's a waste—where fiends and tempests howl ;” and the soul, not taught of God, yields not “ the peaceable fruits of righteousness.”

In *Autumn*, when the leaves wither and fall, and the fruits of the earth are gathered in, forcibly may we feel reminded that “ we all do fade as a leaf,” and that “ whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

And in *Winter*, when the fragrance of the natural world is far away, and man left all the more to himself, to the world within, how important to indulge sober thought, to cherish those principles that are according to godliness, to cultivate those spiritual tastes of which heaven will be a never-ending gratification, and to indulge those bright prospects which no change in the seasons can materially affect, and which a change of worlds cannot impair.

There are three particular directions of thought to which winter peculiarly tends to turn the mind : old age ; seasons of adversity ; the state of the unrenewed.

Old age.—How common to speak of old age as the winter of life.

“And now dread winter spreads his latest glooms
And reigns tremendous o’er the conquered year :

Behold, fond man !

See here thy pictured life : pass some few years,
Thy flowery spring, thy summer’s ardent strength.

Thy sober autumn fading into age.

And pale concluding winter comes at last,

And sheets the scene.

Virtue sole survives,

Immortal, never failing friend of man,

His guide to happiness on high.”

“Virtue sole survives” says the poet. But is it always so? Alas, not seldom how sadly different. The old age of some is desolate indeed, friend after friend having passed away till scarcely one friend of youth or middle life is left. In some cases no loved or loving one, no warm affections are near, to cling like ivy to the falling fabric, to cheer the withered heart ; and saddest of all, no spiritual life, no joys from the upper world, no gladdening associations with a bright hereafter. The

heart of an aged person in such a state—like a nest in winter amid the leafless branches of an old tree—is cold, dreary, joyless. But there is an old age of a widely different character. They that trust in Him who is “the same yesterday, to-day and forever,” “shall not be desolate.”

Seasons of adversity.—That the idea of winter tends to turn the mind in this direction of thought, is indicated by the commonness of the expression—“the winter of adversity.” As chemical and other sciences have advanced, the importance of winter in relation to the soil, its productions and the physical constitution of man, has become more fully understood and more highly appreciated; and as the natural winter, with its storms and frosts and snows, is of great value, so may be the winter of adversity. Jehovah in his wisdom, faithfulness and mercy, is pleased to employ, as need may be, afflictive dispensations with a view to the permanent good of those

that are exercised thereby. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." In the winter of adversity, consider. Commit thy way unto the Lord who "stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind." Commit thy way and thyself to the Lord, who is a stronghold in the day of trouble; and speedily the dark clouds will either pass away or become gilded by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, in due season to disappear forever, leaving you forever to feel—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Like an evergreen in the natural winter, true friendship is peculiarly beautiful in the winter of adversity. And this is part of the moral beauty of the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." In Proverbs we read that "a brother is born for adversity;" and how precious is this truth as we trace it in the character, the life, the death and the whole mediatorial work of Him who came to befriend humanity in its great adversity, and who—

made in the likeness of men—is not ashamed to call his disciples brethren. Blessed result of the winter of adversity to Christians, when it leads them to more confiding reliance on the fathomless sympathy and unfailing faithfulness of Him who was once “a man of sorrows,” and is ever ready to be the consolation of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble. Blessed is the influence of the winter of adversity over the spirit of wanderers from God, when it leads them to hear his voice who is “as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.”

The state of the unrenewed.—In that wintry state of soul, what want of spiritual life, what coldness to spiritual realities! But for our familiarity with the change, how striking would appear to us the contrast between winter and spring in the natural world. A person born blind, and having his eyes opened in winter, would be amazed indeed by the great sight above and around him. But when all nature

seemed changing in early spring, how peculiar, intense and admiring would be the feelings of his uplifted heart ; and what an idea it would give such an one of some unseen power or powers producing the great and gladdening change.

Now, the power by which the face of the earth is renewed is the same divine power which, in mercy and through the mediatorial interposition of Christ "the power of God," is quickening souls far and wide among the nations, and ever contributing towards the fulfilment of the great promise, "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."

Every winter we feel certain that spring will follow it ; and that feeling of certainty we may associate in our minds with three particular facts—viz.: that God has thousands of times renewed the face of the earth ; that He is able to do so in the future as He has done in the past ; and that He has expressly promised to do so "while the earth remaineth."

Those in a wintry state of soul should be animated and encouraged by the analagous truths that will readily occur to the mind. God has in thousands of instances quickened souls to "newness of life"—He is able to do so in the future as He has done in the past—and the following admonition and assurance have been conjointly proclaimed "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." "Verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live."

XII.—THE “RESTING PLACE.”



XII.—THE “RESTING PLACE.”

JOB said, “Where shall wisdom be found?” and what he added is equally apposite to the question, Where shall *rest* be found? “The depth saith, it is not in me; and the sea saith, it is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold. It cannot be valued by the gold of Ophir.” But, “without money and without price” sinners, even the chief, accepting the reconciliation, may “rest in the Lord.”

The people of God have a “resting place.” They are “a people near to Him,” “made nigh by the blood of Christ,” their life “hid with Christ in God,” and in the divine favour they find a resting place. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” “We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;” but to be in spirit “within

the veil" is to occupy a position never discovered and obtained by the unaided faculties of the soul. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." "The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." What cause then for grateful joy if we have received the "Spirit which is of God," and have been led by the Spirit into the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty as our resting place. Whatever may assail the understanding, the heart, and the imagination, yet may the whole soul—amid the moral disorders of this world, and the mysteries of the universe—calmly and confidently rest under the shadow of the Almighty, whose assurance is this—"My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord." "This is the rest wherewith He causes the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing." It is as the people of God abide in this resting place that, amid the waves and

billows, the storms and wrecks of the troubled sea of human life, they are conscious of having "an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast"—that, looking forward to the remainder of their life on earth, they may feel "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in his pavilion"—and, looking beyond death and the grave, may ponder with faith and lively hope the precious words "The work of righteousness is peace ; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

But the people of God are *prone to forget their resting place*. Of this we are often reminded by the word of the Lord. "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number. My people have turned away on the mountains ; they have gone from mountain to hill, *they have forgotten their rest-*

ing place," Jer. 50:6. Who shall say how many tears have flowed, how many hearts have been wrung with anguish, how many have had to mourn in bitterness of soul over sad and deplorable falls, from forgetting the resting place? The alienating tendency of the remains of indwelling sin, the love of the world, and the want of watchfulness unto prayer, have greatly to do with the sad proneness to forget the resting place.

To have done so is *matter for lamentation*. "This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation." It is so to "the Lord our God," who says "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?" and should it not be so to all who have reason to feel "O that it were with me as in months past!"

To those who are being enabled by the grace of God to abide in the resting place we say "Hail ye highly favoured of the Lord!" "Rejoice in the Lord alway;" but "rejoice

with trembling," and lay to heart the words of Barnabas to the Christians at Antioch, "who, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would *cleave unto the Lord.*" To such as have forgotten their resting place we say "Hear ye the word of the Lord." "Return unto me ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." How gratefully and promptly should this kind call be hailed and accepted! David, who had forgotten his resting place, considered his ways, mourned before the Lord, expostulated with himself saying "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee;" and was enabled joyfully to feel "He restoreth my soul." And, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures *might have hope.*"

But what shall be said to such as have not found, and perhaps have neither the eyes nor

the heart in any degree toward the true resting place? "Give glory to the Lord before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Of some we read "They repented not, to give God glory." Jehovah proclaims "In returning and rest shall ye be saved;" and He also proclaims "This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him." Come—O come without delay—in spirit and in truth to Jesus, and hear his words: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. Learn of Me, and *ye shall find rest to your souls.*"

XIII.—THE KING OF ZION.



XIII.—THE KING OF ZION.

IN our walk's about Zion, we have considered how good it is for her children to dwell together in unity, and that in connection with their relation to Zion's King they are lifted up from the high place they occupy as creatures in the scale of creation to a position higher still—to be “as the angels” “for ever and ever.”

We have considered the moral strength they need on their way to glory everlasting, and the prayerful spirit they should cherish towards Him “whose fire is in Zion.”

In the history of Peter and Paul we have found instances of fulfilment of the promise “of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her ; and the highest himself shall establish her.”

We touched upon the self-inspection needed

by all her children : and, "going round about her," have pointed to the appalling position of somnambulists in the dangerous distance—walking about in their dreams in the deep sleep of an unregenerate state, unmoved by the words "O God thou art terrible out of thy holy places."

In connection with references to autumn and winter, we have noticed truths that should be regarded by Zion's children at successive periods in human life ; and have considered the resting place in Zion under the shadow of Him who "is known in her palaces for a refuge."

And now let us give our minds definitely to the consideration of Zion's King. The writer of these lines well remembers walking about Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace, and how much there was to lead to the thought of our beloved Sovereign, Queen Victoria. But who shall attempt to say how much there is in, and in association with Zion,

that tends to lead our thoughts to Zion's King? The sublime Isaiah was led by the Spirit to proclaim "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called wonderful, counsellor, *the mighty God*." Well may his name be called "wonderful;" for, whilst partaker of our nature as the man Christ Jesus, He is "Immanuel, God with us."

We have often mused on the insuperable difficulties with which they have intellectually to struggle who, amid the teachings of Scripture, deny the divinity of Christ. Let us look at some of their difficulties.

1. *He is represented as possessed of Divine attributes.* He must be present in different places at the same time who could truthfully say "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven." He must

be more than man who could truly say "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

2. In Scripture He is expressly called "*God*." "Whose are the Fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is our all God blessed for ever," Rom. 9:5. See also Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8.

3. He is represented in Scripture as the Creator of *all* creature existence. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made" John 1:3.

4. He is the upholder of all things. "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist," Col. 1:17. "Upholding all things by the word of his power," Heb. 1:3.

5. Works were performed on earth by Christ indicating divine power; a power that He Himself possessed, for "there went virtue out of Him, and He healed them all."

6. He approvingly *accepted worship*. Tho-

mas said to Him, "My Lord and my God."
"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed ; blessed are they that have not seen and yet believed."

A most interesting instance has come to the knowledge of the writer, of a very thoughtful man who was brought to accept the doctrine of the divinity of Christ under the influence of these words of Scripture over his spirit. He thought and felt thus, and most justly :—" If Jesus accepted worship, He cannot be a truthful and good man unless He is also divine ; but I believe in his truthfulness and goodness, and now thankfully feel Thou art the truth and the life, O Christ, my Lord and my God."

7. If Christ were not divine, Scripture representations of heaven would be representations of splendid idolatry ; for certainly He is represented as worshipped on high by the redeemed and all the angels.

Such are some of the insuperable difficulties in the way of the denial of the divinity of Christ ; but to us they are grand and impregnable bulwarks of faith in Him who is "God our Saviour." Then, "let the children of Zion be joyful in their King" who, whilst his love "passeth knowledge," is mighty to protect and "mighty to save."

He of whom the Father proclaimed "yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion," is "all and in all" to Zion's children. The foundation of the hope that is "full of immortality." "The Lord our Righteousness;" in Him true believers have "righteousness and *strength*." They are under the protection of the power by which the universe was made, and by which it is upheld ; they have the guidance for this life and the life to come of the wisdom which is unerring, which is associated in the mind of the King of Zion with reason eternally right and knowledge utterly boundless ; their eternal interests are linked

by an invisible hand with the unfailing faithfulness, the everlasting love, and the Almighty power of the King of Zion. Since Christ is divine, to feel "we will not have this man to reign over us" is the most heinous ingratitude.

Were an earthly sovereign, after sending ambassadors of peace to a rebellious province, to lay aside for a season the robes of royalty, to leave the palace, and clothed in a garb like that of an ordinary subject, to go personally to the rebels and press upon their acceptance most reasonable and forgiving terms of reconciliation, what ingratitude as well as folly to turn away from them !

But such condescending kindness would be as a drop to the ocean compared to the measureless condescension and abounding compassion of Him who "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and humbled

Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ;” who is now highly exalted that “ at His name every knee should bow,” who is King of Zion and compassionately proclaims, “ Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest to your souls.” If any reader of these lines is conscious of not having as yet fled to a place under the sceptre of the Saviour’s authority and love, may such be led by the Spirit truly to feel—

“ Lord take my heart just as it is ;
Therein set up thy throne ;
So shall I love Thee above all,
And live to Thee alone.”

XIV.—MOURNERS IN ZION.





XIV.—MOURNERS IN ZION.

JEREMIAH said—"Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God." A sad proportion of the feelings of humanity in this sinful world have been and are of a sorrowful character; but sorrowful feelings are far from being confined to mourners in Zion.

What mourning in Sodom and Gomorrah when the Lord "rained on them brimstone and fire;" and in Egypt when "there was not a house where there was not one dead;" and in Babylon when "one post ran to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end;" and in Jerusalem when "the city was destroyed, and the sanctuary and the people brought into desolation!" And many are the sorrows of thousands far

from God, wandering as sheep without a shepherd, liable any moment to stumble on dark mountains, and lie down in sorrow never to be turned into joy.

Let not then the children of Zion whilst only on their way to perfection think it "a strange thing" that they are ever liable to more or less sorrow as they are becoming prepared for the better land, where the days of their mourning shall be ended. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," and very diversified are their sorrows. Some have to bear bitter sorrows, as those of the deeply afflicted father who exclaimed, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Many are the mourners over the removal of endeared Christian relatives, like Martha and Mary who sorrowfully said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Not a few mourn over those outside "the gates of Zion"—as did David

when he said, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," and Paul when "he ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

But they who are referred to in Scripture as mourners in Zion are mainly those that mourn *over their own state*; and three of such classes are the following:—

1. They who have become awakened to a realization of *alarming deficiency*. For years they may have been coming before God as his people come, and sitting before Him as his people sit, and hearing his words, and approaching his table who says, "do this in remembrance of Me." But they have been of a *negative* character—sadly neglecting the second part of the charge, "Depart from evil *and do good*." They have not been living a life of active response to the claims of the divine Redeemer. They have been trusting that they were not in the broad way, but they have not been cultivating a daily concern to ad-

vance in the narrow one. They have had the idea that they were in the light, but they have not been "*walking* in the light as children of the light and of the day." They have not been seeking "to be spiritually minded," to "press toward the mark for the prize." They have not been realizing any heartfelt interest in the extension of his kingdom who said "He that is not with Me is against Me ; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad." They are alarmed as they awake to see their portentous deficiency ; and not only are they solemnized but grieved in spirit as they ponder the words, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion," Amos 6 : 1.

No tongue can tell how thankful they should feel to be brought to such a realization of their state. To many of such the question occurs, Am I a Christian *at all*? And should any reader of these lines be conscious of utter uncertainty in that great matter, to such the principal thing we would say is this—whether

or no there has ever been any good thing in you towards the Lord God, the wise course would be *to begin anew*. "Now is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation." Whether your self-consecration be renewed or for the first time real, yield yourself *now* to the Lord. He is waiting to be gracious, and saying "If ye will inquire, inquire ye ; return, come." What matter for praise if now you realize under grace, not only brokenness and contrition of heart which God will not despise, but peace with God through Christ, and a holy and happy resolve to live a new life to his glory.

2. They who feel "O that I were as in months past !"

They mourn that they have left their first love ; that the love which warmed and gladdened their hearts when they first knew the Lord instead of growing warmer seems to have declined, and their graces to have correspondingly drooped instead of growing and

developing into the beauty of holiness under the rays of the Sun of Righteousness.

Mourning in Zion, they feel—

“Where is the blessedness I knew,
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his Word?”

Let such consider whether they have been seeking to depart from *all* iniquity and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord—remembering the words “If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.” Let them search and try their ways—seek to detect omissions of duty and neglect of privileges—and ponder the words “Is there not a cause?” Let them be humbled in spirit before Him who “bringeth low and lifteth up,” and with renewed self-devotedness pray for the holy Spirit of promise—

“Return O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn
And drove Thee from my breast.

So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame,
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb."

3. A third class of mourners in Zion are those who are in bitterness of soul as they look back to grievous falls into temptation and great transgressions. It seems clear that David had a pious mother; he must have thought so when he said "I am the son of thine handmaid"—"Save the son of thine handmaid." We may regard him as having begun in early life to live to the Lord who took him from the sheep-folds "to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance." But, amid his royal prosperities, he yielded to temptation; and, adding sin to sin, was guilty of adultery and of the death of an injured husband. Had he been left to himself after those great and "presumptuous sins," can there be any doubt that there would have been fatal blindness of mind, searedness of

conscience and hardness of heart? How amazingly unmoved he seems to have remained until God, in his great mercy, awoke up his soul through the instrumentality of Nathan the prophet. Coming to himself, he became thoroughly a mourner in Zion. Again and again he felt himself ready to sink amid a sea of sorrow. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." "Will the Lord cast off for ever? Hath He in anger shut up his tender mercies?" "I am weary with my groaning." "The sorrows of death compassed me, *and the pains of hell gat hold upon me*; I found trouble and sorrow."

That his sorrow was "after a godly sort"—godly sorrow, working repentance unto salvation—is clear from his subsequent life, and was markedly indicated by the spirit of his prayer, manifesting not more earnestly a desire to be pardoned than to be purified from sin. In immediate connection with the prayer

“O God, blot out my transgressions,” he said “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” By the power of the Spirit he was brought to true repentance, was graciously forgiven by Him who “is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ;” and was enabled to feel with grateful joy “Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” So was there graciously given to him “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness,” Isaiah 61 : 3.

What merciful help is hereby afforded to the hope of any who after having been delivered by the God of all grace from the power of darkness, and “translated into the kingdom of his dear Son,” have yielded to temptation and fallen into some great sin ! Let them earnestly pray to be enabled thoroughly to realize a sense of the greatness and aggravations of their guilt ; let them pray impor-

tunately for "a right spirit"—a spirit of self-abasement and godly sorrow, and desires after "newness of life"—and let them return to the Lord who graciously proclaims "Return unto Me ye backsliding children, and I will *heal* your backslidings."

But, though David obtained mercy, what a warning is furnished by the fall of such an one, and by the remainder of his life on earth—for, though mercifully delivered "from going down to the pit," his transgression was "visited with a rod and his iniquity with stripes," Psalm 89:32.

What a contrast between the bright prosperity of David previous to that dismal era in his history when he so greatly sinned against the Lord and the cloudy and dark days along his subsequent life on earth! Soon after his great transgressions came the deplorable humiliation and shame and deep distress of his daughter Tamar, and brother murdering brother in his own family. A little farther

on in his history, and he bitterly feels "Lord, now are they increased that trouble me;" and from his own "beautiful" son Absalom who sought to dethrone him, fleeing for his life "he went up by the ascent of mount Olivet—and wept as he went up." What changes had come! Royalty that had been radiant with prosperity is "barefooted" and in tears, in great adversity, 2 Sam. 15:30. Such were some of the heavy troubles that rolled in upon his soul; and the relation of his great sins to his great sorrows is clear from the words of the Lord by Nathan—"Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised Me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house," 2 Sam. 12:9-11. In view of all this, how important the prayer "Let not any

iniquity have dominion over me ;” and how important attention to the words of Jesus “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”

The mourners in Zion that shall have been restored from great transgressions will as really as the rest of Zion’s children be lifted up for ever by Him who proclaims “I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, *who are of Thee.*” They, as really as the rest of the ransomed of the Lord, “shall come and sing in the height of Zion ; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.”

“Be glad, ye children of Zion.” “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save ;” and having saved, “He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will rest in his love, He will joy over thee with singing.” And so, in the boundless consciousness of the King of Zion, and in the consciousness—according to the ever-increasing capacity of all the redeemed—there will be “fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.”

XV.—MANY CROWNS.



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“WHEN the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the Throne of his glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations. . . . Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Then shall be verified in the glorification of the great multitude that no man can number the divine assurance, “when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

But in this closing address, we wish mainly to refer to the glories of the King of Zion.

When we think of “Solomon in all his glory,” we do not only think of his reign,

under which "there was peace from Dan to Beersheba all the days of Solomon." We think also of his wisdom, and his riches, and "the house that he had built," and his fame, and the influence of his name not only in the limited land of Judea, but far and wide in the world—for not only the Queen of Sheba but "All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart."

And so when we think of the King of Zion in all his glory, we think not only of his mediatorial reign, but of his wisdom, his unsearchable riches, the house that He is building—the living temple of the Lord of which He is to "bear the glory;" his "renown," and the influence of his name not only in this world, but far and wide in the universe of God.

"On his head are many Crowns."—Rev. 19:12.

1st. One of the glories of Christ is that of

being Himself *a revelation of God* to fallen humanity. He is the visible expression of Him whom "no man hath seen, or can see." Whilst the heavens declare the glory of God, they afford only a few glimmering rays of the light ineffable ; only gleams of the glory of which Christ is the brightness. Finely was it said by Plato that "light is the shadow of God ;" but Christ is "the express image of his person." He could say "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." God is love, and in Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us, and whom the Father spared not, but delivered up for us all, we see love divine "manifest in the flesh." Honour to Lord Bacon, who by the inductive system of philosophy, undermined the foundations of science "falsely so called ;" honour to Sir Isaac Newton, who has rolled away from so many minds false views of the material universe by the discovery of the great law of universal gravitation ; honour to the illustrious

Locke and the sublime Milton for their enlightened recognition of the mutual rights and obligations of men and nations; but honour unspeakably higher to Him who throws floods of light on man's estate and grand possibilities; revealing God to man, and man to himself, and Himself as the way to the Father and to everlasting glory.

2nd. Another of the glories of Christ is that of being "*Mediator between God and men.*" No other being in all the universe occupies that position. He is that mystic "ladder" the foot of which, in his humanity, comes close to sinful human nature, the summit of which, in his divinity, is high as the throne of God. And how is it that the Son of God occupies that sublime mediatorial position? He does so, according to the merciful will of the Father, *by virtue of the sacrifice of Himself*. He loved us, and gave Himself for us; a sacrifice "*for sin*"—"a sacrifice *to God*;" and, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, met the

claims of eternal justice, magnified the law that man had broken, condemned sin in the flesh, and opened up a way by which God can be just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. What a bright crown of glory this on the head of the King of Zion !

3rd. Another glory of Christ is that of *conducting to its grand consummation the great work for which He became Mediator* ; the “bringing of many sons unto glory ;” and the great multitude of the redeemed will be *so many gems in that crown.*

In his accomplishment of that great work, think of his glorious power over the understanding, the heart, the will, the whole soul. The King of Zion “casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Himself.”

Think of his power—

(1) *Over the understanding.* By exhibit-

ing truth, spiritual and saving, by quickening to spiritual perception, by guiding to spiritual thought, by raising spiritual thought to the higher character of true wisdom, He renders souls "wise unto salvation" through faith in his name.

(2) *Over the heart.* By the cross, by the love and compassion there displayed, He slays the enmity; and, by subsequent influences of his truth and grace, He wins the affections of human hearts to joy in God through Him—and multitudes, the love of Christ constraining them, are from age to age led to feel—

"Here fix, my roving heart,
Here rest, my warmest love;
Till the communion be complete,
In nobler scenes above."

(3) *Over the will.* The will is a mighty power in man. It is the main-spring in his intellectual and moral system. It is the motive power in relation to the whole soul; and, when that is wrong, all else is not merely

wrong, but moving or tending to move in wrong directions. Now, to the King of Zion belongs the glory of triumph over the human will. By checking the sinful tendencies of depraved souls, by delivering from this evil world, by breaking the fetters of sin and Satan, and by making willing in the day of his power, He restores the human will to cheerful compliance with the will of God.

(4) *Over the whole soul.* He who said "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified, through the truth" is from age to age, as Head of the Church and Head over all things to the Church, advancing in the household of faith the great work of sanctification. By his Word, and Spirit, and providential dispensations, He is restoring the lost image of God in souls; and, as an architect is admired in a building, and a great artist in a fine painting, and the power and wisdom and goodness of God in the works of creation, the Saviour will for ever be

“glorified *in* his Saints, and admired *in* all them that believe.”—2 Thes. 1 : 10.

4th. Another of the glories of Christ will forever be that of *replenishing the heaven of heavens*. “In all things,” He is to have the “preëminence ;” and can we doubt that the great multitude of the redeemed will outnumber “the angels that kept not their first estate.”

5th. Another glory of Christ will forever be that of *having diminished* more than men or angels can tell the collective amount of moral evil in the universe of God—that “abominable thing” that God hates ; hates it, not only as opposed to his holiness, but, as the Father of Spirits, hates it as opposed to the well-being of “his offspring.”

6th. Another glory of Christ is that of *expanding the views, increasing the joys, and elevating the praises of all the Sons of God, the holy angels that never sinned*. When the foundations of the earth were laid, “the

morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy ;” and, in the course of successive periods of duration before the fall of our first parents, much may have engaged angelic thought, telling more and more vividly and fully of the power and wisdom and goodness of God.

But when the first ray of Gospel light fell on the minds of our first parents through the medium of the intimation that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, and from that era onward as the light of the long dawn increased before the brightness of the rising of the great and glorious “Sun of Righteousness,” into those revelations the angels ever “desired to look ;” and as they have observed the progress of the great work of human redemption, and, in Christ the King of Zion, Mercy and Truth meeting together, Righteousness and Peace kissing each other, they have all been sitting at the feet of Jesus and learning of

Him. We read of the "intent that unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God ;" and not only from benevolent joy in the salvation of a great multitude of fellow-immortals, but from adoring appreciation of the exalted views of the wisdom and love of God they have derived from the work of Christ as "a Prince and a Saviour," they worship the King of Zion with grateful joy, saying "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. 5 : 12.

7th. The highest glory of the King of Zion is this—that *from the mediatorial work and reign of Christ is "glory to God in the highest."*

After the great announcement to the shepherds on the plain of Bethlehem, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day

in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying Glory to God in the highest." We do not think they meant in the highest heaven, but *in the highest degree*. Of Zion it is said "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God," Isaiah 62 : 3. "When the Lord shall build up Zion He shall appear in his glory," Psalm 102 : 16.

The highest glory of "the Father of spirits," "the Father of mercies," "the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour" is that of "bringing many sons unto glory" in a way by which the Divine mind is more gloriously expressed, and the Divine attributes and perfections more brightly and fully displayed than in any other department of Divine manifestation in the universal empire of the King of kings. In so transcendent and exalted a sense is it true that "Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

“My meditation of Him shall be sweet ; I will be glad in the *Lord*.”—Psalm 104 : 34.

Thou first, and last, and living One,
The Son of God, and Son of man ;
As in the past thy love we see,
'Tis sweet to meditate of Thee.
When from the cross we raise our eyes,
To Thee, our Lord, beyond the skies ;
Thy power so great, thy grace so free !
'Tis sweet to meditate of Thee.
And when we look along this vale,
And feel that heart and strength must fail,
And think of immortality,
How sweet to meditate of Thee !
O that, to glory raised by grace,
We may on high behold thy face ;
From every sin and sorrow free,
To dwell eternally with Thee.

ERRATA.

On page 110, third line from bottom, instead of "rashness" read "freshness." On page 121, at tenth line from top, for "sheets" read "shuts."





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Walks about Zion.

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